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STATE FOR S/CT AND NEA/MAG (HARRIS AND HOPKINS)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/26/2017
TAGS: [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [TS](#)
SUBJECT: TUNISIA CHARGES 29 WITH PLOTTING TO COMMIT
TERRORIST ACTS AND UNSEAT THE GOVERNMENT

REF: TUNIS 154 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Robert F. Godec for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Twenty-nine Tunisians have been charged by the GOT for involvement in the disrupted December 2006/January 2007 terrorist plot, according to a lawyer for the accused. Among the charges filed against the suspects were: attempting to unseat the government, attempting to commit terrorist acts, murder with intent, attempted murder, possession of weapons and explosives to commit terrorist acts, and belonging to an illegal organization. In January, the Tunisian Minister of Interior reported that GOT security forces had killed 12 and arrested 15 people involved in a plot to attack US and UK embassies and diplomats (reftel). However, lawyer Samir Ben Amor told PolOff on September 25 that the case files include no reference to any plot against foreign interests in Tunisia.

¶2. (C) Further, Ben Amor said that most of the 29 accused were not directly involved in the plot. Most of them are related to or acquaintances of the 15 the GOT claimed to have arrested. Included among them is the brother of one of those killed by security forces, who is accused of failing to inform the police of terrorist plans. Ben Amor estimated that over two thousand Tunisians have been arrested following the December/January incidents. While he believed most of the detained simply have conservative religious views, he said it appeared some are fervent believers that the GOT should be replaced by an Islamic government.

¶3. (S) Comment. Although charges have been brought against some of the accused, the GOT has made no other official comments since January. Similarly, despite high-level USG efforts to obtain more information about the events, the GOT has shared few substantive details about the threat to USG interests. These charges are the first official indication that the plotters were intending to target the GOT, not just foreign diplomatic interests, as GOT sources had previously stated. We continue to press for answers, but, given the GOT's reticence to discuss sensitive domestic issues, learning more will continue to be slow and difficult. End Comment.
GODEC